



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Response to the Report by the Head of the
OSCE Mission to Serbia,
Ambassador Hans Ola Urstad**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 29, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you Ambassador Urstad, for your excellent summary of the recent activities of the Mission in Serbia and the political context in which it currently operates. We agree fully that Serbia has taken further positive steps in the past year along the path of democratic reform. This progress has been facilitated by the collaborative relationship your mission continues to enjoy with the Government of Serbia and by the hard work and dedication of your fine staff.

There is much we could commend but allow me to mention just a few key areas of Mission activity which the United States particularly values, starting with the efforts of your staff to support participation of the local Albanian parties from southern Serbia in the country's recent parliamentary elections. We are delighted to see the election of an ethnic Albanian to serve as a member of the Serbian parliament. We very much applaud the work the Mission is doing to build security and stability in southern Serbia and to promote the integration of its Albanian community into state institutions and the country's broader economic and social life.

We are pleased to see that the Mission has built on its experiences in southern Serbia to undertake new initiatives in the southwestern region of Sandzak, which faces some difficult economic and social challenges. The Mission may want to consider committing greater resources and staff to this region to work with its Muslim population, to help reduce party tensions, and to promote closer cooperation between local police and prosecutors.

The United States also remains impressed with the vital work the Mission is doing to promote overall police reform, accountability, and transparency, and to further develop the capacity of the Serbian police and judiciary to fight organized crime. Similarly, we support very much the Mission's efforts to promote community policing principles and cooperative relationships between the police and local communities, particularly in multi-ethnic areas.

With respect to the assistance the Mission provides in police education and training, we echo your appeal to participating States to second the kind of qualified advisors you need to help sustain further police reform.

We applaud the Mission's assistance in building greater legislative oversight and transparency and its role in promoting greater involvement of the public in the legislative process at the national and local levels.

We also commend the Mission for the solid work it is doing to help Serbia meet international human rights standards, to fight discrimination and intolerance, and to resolve outstanding refugee return and integration issues. With respect to this last point, we note that Serbia still hosts 104,000 refugees. We call on the governments of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia to reinvigorate efforts to live up to the commitments they made in the Sarajevo Declaration of January 2005.

Ambassador Urstad, there is no question that the work of your mission is helping to advance Serbia's stated aim of integrating into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Serbia, of course, still faces many challenges in making this dream a reality, such as implementing the many new laws it has passed with the Mission's assistance and cooperating fully with ICTY, to name just two of the most pressing. The sluggish pace of forming a new government, however, is preventing Serbia from giving these challenges the full attention they deserve.

The preoccupation of Serbia's political leadership with the debate over Kosovo's future status is also contributing to this current drift. We are therefore pleased that Martti Ahtisaari's final report and comprehensive proposal have finally been transmitted to the UN Security Council members for their consideration.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Ambassadors,

The time has come to solve the last major unsettled issue related to the breakup of Yugoslavia. Both Serbia and Kosovo deserve clarity about their respective futures. Further delays would not bring us closer to achieving a viable solution, but would actually make the situation worse and lead to an unraveling of compromises made in the process so far.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, allow me to express the great confidence we have in Mr. Ahtisaari, and to call on all participating States to support the recommendations he has put forth, including his proposal that Kosovo become independent. We are confident that the rapid adoption of his comprehensive proposal by the Security Council will solve the last major unsettled issue related to the breakup of Yugoslavia and facilitate Serbia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.